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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MARR](#) [UNSC](#) [ARABL](#) [EG](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR: EGYPT'S MFA OPTIMISTIC AFTER LATEST ROUND
OF AFRICAN UNION TALKS, SEEKS USG VIEWS

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political
Affairs William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph
seven.

Summary

[1](#)2. (C) Egyptian MFA contacts expressed surprise at how
"positive" the November 30 Darfur talks in Abuja had been,
among members of the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security
Commission (PSC). The MFA's Assistant Minister for African
Affairs, Massoum Marzouk, told poloff he believed the
Government of Sudan conceded on several key issues remaining
from the November 16 Addis Ababa meeting hosted by the UN and
AU. Marzouk sought USG reactions to the Abuja talks, and
reported "conflicting reports" on USG Darfur policy.
Marzouk, and another senior MFA official, expressed concern
that Washington was overly strident on UNSCR 1706
implementation, despite what was believed to have been
agreement from the U.S. on a "third way" compromise on a
hybrid UN/AU force for Darfur. They expressed concern that
Washington's public comments could increase Khartoum's
obstinacy and prolong resolution of the conflict. On Cairo's
reported efforts to bring Darfur nonsignatories to the peace
table and adhere to the Darfur Peace Agreement, MFA contacts
believed little progress was being made with Khalil Ibrahim
and other rebels. End summary.

Abuja PSC Talks Productive

[1](#)3. (C) During a December 4 meeting, MFA Assistant Minister
for African Affairs Ambassador Marzoum Marzouk told poloff
that Egypt was pleased with the outcome of the latest PSC
ministerial meeting held in Abuja on November 30. His
comments were echoed by MFA Cabinet Staff Member Ahmed Aboul
Zeid, with whom poloff met separately on December 4.
Responding to poloff's question about a recent unhelpful
letter from Sudanese President Bashir to UN SYG Annan with
the GOS response to the November 16 Addis meeting
"conclusions document," Marzouk said the letter was no longer
relevant, as the latest Abuja PSC talks had rendered it
obsolete. South African President Mbeki, UN Deputy Secretary
General Guehenno and others pressed Bashir hard in Abuja to
respond more favorably on UN/AU proposals spelled out in
Addis on November 16. The reaction from the Sudanese
delegation, Marzouk said, was positive, and was clarified in
a non-paper handed out to PSC members (Marzouk said he gave
the document to his minister and did not have a copy).

GOS Accepts Principle of Hybrid Force

¶4. (C) Marzouk emphasized that the Sudanese accepted "the principle of a hybrid force" with some qualifications, such as limiting the total force size to 10,000 troops. Privately, however, the Sudanese communicated acceptance of the UNSCR 1706 number of 17,000 troops - provided the troops were Africans, he added. The GOS delegation also said in Abuja they would accept non-AU forces to assist in technical roles such as communications and command and control. Furthermore, the GOS accepts UN funding for augmentation of AU troops with UN forces -- up to 17,000, along with 3,000 police. Bashir also did not object to the UN and AU selecting a force commander, as long as Bashir was consulted in the process. Marzouk shared his "personal view" that the agreement reached in Abuja did not give Bashir a veto on this point. On selecting a Special Representative to the UN Secretary General (SRSG), the Sudanese were reportedly

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adamant to preserve their right to consult further (Note: reference is to paragraph 28 in the Addis November 16 Conclusions final-final document. End note). Marzouk stated his view that the GOS would accept an appointment of an SRSG by the UN Secretary General.

Washington Views?

¶5. (C) Further characterizing the Abuja PSC talks, Marzouk stated his surprise at how "positive" the talks had been, especially given numerous bleak predictions beforehand from the EU Sudan envoy and others. Nevertheless, he added,

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recent reports from Washington were "very discouraging" since they suggested the USG is pressing for full implementation of UNSCR 1706, despite the approach agreed upon in Addis on November 16. Asked if London had reacted any differently, Marzouk said the British were talking of a "Chapter VIII" approach, as envisioned in Addis. (Note: UK Poloff confirmed December 4 that the Egyptians briefed the Foreign Office in London on the Abuja talks, and that London was sanguine on recent developments. End note). MFA Cabinet staffer Ahmed Aboul Zeid separately confirmed Egyptian concerns over USG policy deliberations, and asked for clarification of U.S. views. Poloff confirmed that Egyptian Ambassador in Washington Nabil Fahmy intended to meet APNSA Hadley this week in Washington, and would likely raise the issue with him.

Darfur Non-Signatories

¶6. (C) Asked about Egypt's reported efforts to host Khalil Ibrahim and other Darfur non-DPA signatories to pressure them into a ceasefire, Aboul Zeid had no information on the topic, pointing poloff to Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman's office for additional information. Upon further questioning, he said it was his understanding that little progress had been made with the Darfur non-signatories, but that the AU and UN were expected to press this issue in the coming weeks.

¶7. (U) Action request: Post requests guidance on sharing with the GOE our views on the recent Abuja talks, and next steps with respect to a peacekeeping force in Darfur.
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